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NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Address by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi  
Chief Minister of KwaZulu and President of Inkatha

EMANDLENI-MATLENG 21ST MAY 1989

Bishop A.D. Dlamini, the Reverend Zondi, the Reverend M.A Dlamini, the Reverend E. Ncube, the Reverend F. Ngcobo, all Reverend Ministers present, my brothers and sisters. We gather on this National Day of Prayer to offer ourselves and our every endeavour in the service of God that the nation may move to its Divinely appointed ends.

In the world there are Muslim nations, there are Hindu nations, there are Christian nations and we in South Africa regard ourselves as a Christian nation. Our first prayer is that God opens our eyes to what it means to be a Christian in South Africa.

There are perhaps many ways of looking at Christian responsibility in South Africa today. Each would be valid in its own framework but I believe that our national circumstances compel us to define Christian responsibility as responsibility to one's neighbour of the kind that is totally opposed to the killing of the poorest of the poor by the poorest of the poor and the killing of the oppressed by the most oppressed.

There is something very hideous about human beings who turn to snap and snarl at each other as they fight over issues just as a pack of curs would fight over a bone. There is something very wrong about generating all thoughts of excuses of why there should be killing and why brother should be turned against brother, sister against sister and why child should be turned against parent.

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There is something very wrong when the hideous crimes which every Christian actually condemns are the natural outcome of the circumstances created by the Christians. You cannot encourage people to hate and then blame them for killing.

There is today a great cry going out for peace. It is a cry from the very hearts of our communities. It is a cry from the inner souls of bereaved mothers, bereaved fathers and bereaved brothers and sisters. It is a cry of the outraged who say enough is enough and put an end to this killing.

The people's cry for peace is so great that even revolutionary organisations like the ANC have called for the cessation of Black-on-Black violence in the Greater Pietermaritzburg Area and further afield in Natal and KwaZulu to which it has spread. The ANC's self-proclaimed allies - the UDF and COSATU - are also now saying there should be peace.

There is consensus that there should be peace and it is now time that we as Christians and the churches as the instruments of God moved in to bring peace where there is strife.

My brothers and sisters, it is not only that peace is being cried out for by the people in South Africa who are affected most by the hideous Black-on-Black confrontations that have been taking place. Our whole sub-continent is calling for peace. People everywhere have suffered because of violence and the groundswell demand for peace amongst numerous countries' rank and file citizens, is moving governments to establish peace.

The call for peace in South Africa is an echo of a very much wider call for peace in the sub-continent. Angolans are calling for peace; Namibians are calling for peace and all those who backed war in Angola and Namibia are now withdrawing their backing and throwing their weight behind the peace programme that has been established.

My brothers and sisters, the demand for peace runs even deeper amongst mankind today. There is a great move forward towards peace

in a joint effort by the Americans and the Russians.: Disarmament and the control of nuclear weapons is being proceeded with. There are joint commitments by the Soviet Union and the United States to establish peace and the importance of what these two nations of the world are doing is such that their deliberations can truly be regarded as historic.

Against this wide background of the demand for peace, we in Inkatha and in KwaZulu are absolutely determined to drive forward to peace. We have mounted a peace initiative which is an initiative through which we participate in a groundswell in grass-root South Africa, an initiative in a changing Southern Africa and an initiative in the wider circumstances of the international community.

My brothers and sisters, I must sound sombre warnings. I believe that the peace move in Natal/KwaZulu is of God. I believe that it

is His Divine Will that we now succeed in stopping this hideous internecine Black-on-Black confrontation which leads to maiming and

killing. God has spoken and said let there be peace. Christ is with us working for peace on every side of every political division. There is the terrible danger that we will spurn God in

our midst because we put party political considerations above our Christian commitments which should demand our total loyalty.

God is the great God of the whole universe and of all mankind everywhere. He is the God of all people in every political party when He decrees it shall be as He decrees. Those who walk with Him will know His love and His presence. Those who spurn Him in His great move for peace in the KwaZulu/Natal region will be cast aside by their own actions and be left godless and without protection and comfort.

If we as a nation do not turn as a nation there will be terrible Divine retribution. God will turn His back on us and look the other way and leave us to suffer the consequences of our Sin. The great Love of God goes with the soul-saving demand for total obedience. There comes a time in every nation when God decrees and the nation must obey or suffer.

I know that God has called me to lead in peace and to lead towards peace and to do so through peaceful means. The peace initiative I have mounted is a peace initiative which I will pursue until it succeeds. I will suffer all manner of things and I will spend myself that there shall be peace amongst us because that is what God wants.

I say again, my brothers and sisters, that we are a Christian nation. In submission to Almighty God we must hear the call for peace; we must hear the cry from the people; we must have

compassion with the bereaved; we must stand with the people and say enough is enough.

It is our responsibility as Christians to see to it now that the drive for peace is a drive that is all-encompassing. It must be a drive which we pursue at every level of our community life and our national life, and it must be pursued in every circumstance we meet. The commitment to peace must be an all-embracing commitment which bends and fashions everything we do towards this end which God has decreed for us.

In the ways of peace there are things that you just do not do. You do not provoke your neighbour and your brother beyond his or her human endurance to bring out the anger that lashes out in self-defence or in aggression. In the ways of peace you hold your tongue and you do not provoke.

In my demands for peace I have said to the leadership of the United Democratic Front and COSATU that there should now be a moratorium on turning our political enemies into villains, that we encourage the people to kill. There must be a moratorium on propaganda aimed at heightening political conflict. Every one of you here knows that there has been such propaganda hurled at the people now for years. The present violence which so mars the dignity of man and shames the nation is the outcome of hideous political propaganda in the struggle for hearts and minds.

My brothers and sisters, we as a nation speak with awe in our voice when we speak of Mfecane/Difagane. We know what the consequences of spreading violence are. I tell you now that unless we heed the call for peace that God has made amongst us, we will suffer the way people of old did not suffer. We will suffer more than they suffered; we will suffer longer than they suffered and our devastation will be a Divine thrashing of the nation for disobedience.

We must have peace; we must cease slinging mud at each other in order to provoke attacks against us in order to prove that we are

holier-than-thou peacemakers of the world. If I swear abuse at passers-by from my house in order to provoke them into throwing stones at my window and then go to the police to charge them with destruction of property, I may get away with it, but in getting away with it, I know what I have done.

Political organisations which have promoted anger and invited people to participate in violent confrontation know what they have done. No matter how much rhetoric is wrapped around their evil deeds they know what they have done. The people know what they have done no matter how much those who do the evil deeds claim to do them on behalf of the people.

The first thing then my brothers and sisters in our great drive for peace, is the need to stop provoking your neighbour and your brother. He is your neighbour whom Christ visits. He is your brother with whom Christ walks. We can be quite sure of this because Christ walks with all.

To provoke others with whom Christ is walking on his road to peace is to do something hideously wrong to our God of the universe; it is to do wrong to yourself. Every act which now provokes violence, provokes others into becoming violent, or provokes those who could adjudicate between peace and violence to opt for violence, is an act against yourself. The ways of violence are self-destructive ways.

The first thing, as I have said my brothers and sisters, is to stop provoking others. The second thing, my brothers and sisters, is to

find common ground. Today I make a great and earnest plea for the acceptance of the indisputable political fact that the only unity there can be amongst Black South Africans is a unity based on the acceptance of a multi-strategy approach in which others are allowed to do what you cannot do or do not want to do.

I again say that God is on every side of every political conflict and pursues all men like the hound of Heaven, regardless of what

political party they belong to. Christ has His own mysterious and

wondrous ways of working with you and your friends. He directs your feet in one direction and He directs the feet of your friend in another direction. He gives to each his own responsibility. He holds the hands of each as each struggles to do what God has set him to do.

Remember now my brothers and sisters, that Christ also directs the feet of your enemies. We are not fighting a holy war in which there is only one right side. There is sin on every side; there is good and bad on every side. Christ is working to maximise the good on every side and to eliminate the bad on every side.

This means my brothers and sisters that there must be common purpose we can find in doing our different things. When the great God of all the universe directs one party to do one thing, and directs another party to do another thing, He does so because there is unity in His Divine being and He does so because He is attacking evil from different directions.

The unity we call for in Inkatha and KwaZulu is a unity based on a multi-strategy approach which gives our Christian responsibilities the greatest possible scope for loving our neighbour as ourselves.

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If we have commitments not to provoke each other and we have commitments to seek common ground, then the ways of peace can begin.

These things which require such an amount of commitment that we wonder sometimes whether they will ever come about, are really the small beginnings of things that God is demanding we start doing. Beyond these things which amount to no more than making action for peace possible, we have to work out action programmes in which we not only talk to each other but act with each other on the ground to bring about peace.

My brothers and sisters, violence has gone very far already. It has torn communities apart and alienation stalks the land as some contagious disease which spreads amongst the angry. The anger is as real as the grief that the killings have created and the anger and the grief combine to call out for vengeance. Revenge stalks the land like some contagious disease. Anger, grief and vengeance combine to produce another wave of violence as communities are torn apart and the very fabric through which peace should be established is ripped asunder.

Peace initiatives must be more than political statements, must be more than conferences. Peace initiatives must be healing initiatives which put communities together. And here again, my brothers and sisters, we have the importance of unity in a multi-strategy approach.

Our move forward to peace must be a move forward in humility. It must be a move forward knowing that we are dependent upon Divine aid to do what has to be done. We will only succeed by the Grace of God because it is only by the Grace of God that we will be spared long enough even to try. In His ever-lasting Love, He will lend His Divine assistance to whoever is an honest borrower.

The humility with which we must move forward towards peace is a humility which knows that there has been wrong on all sides. Let those who act and talk in a holier-than-thou manner beware. The people will move against them. The people want peace and they know that wrong must be stamped out wherever it is found. Political allegiance to one or to any organisation does not condone inhuman action to a member of any other organisation.

I say these things now my brothers and sisters because they have vast implications for the churches in our midst. There has been a very tragic tendency for the clergy to blame the people and to move out ahead of the people leaving the people behind them because they say that the people were wrong. There are those who postured as prophets so far out in front that whole congregations have been left pastoral-less and without the loving care that a clergyman should be giving his flock.

The real change that is taking place in South Africa is a change that God is working out in the hearts and minds of the people. There can be no political change unless it is a change by the people among the people. Any minister of religion or any pastor who dictates what his flock shall and shall not think about life and walks far out in front of them, daring them to be left behind, walks alone and walks without God.

The churches must be churches among the people for the people. They must move forward with the people's pace. They must rely on the fact that Christ does not walk out in front of the people. He walks with them. He is there when they pray: He is there when they succeed; and He is there exhorting them to do better when they fail.

My brothers and sisters, there must be a great calling upon the Church to lead in peace. There must be a great questioning of any man of the cloth who postures in defiance of what the ordinary people want and tells the world what the people ought to want. There are actually clergymen who raise money internationally to conscientise the people and to make them think the ideological thoughts that they want them to think.

My brothers and sisters, Christ is a living Christ in our midst. He is there in everything around us and we as a people have to discover the meaning of the Cross in the things around us where Christ is. We have to reinterpret the Gospel in our circumstances and it is that quiet voice of our conscience, that sharpened Christian perception of reality which enables us to discover the meaning of the Gospel - that and prayer in humility.

There are some clergymen who actually believe that there can now only be a violent ending to South Africa's problems. Go and reason with them, my brothers and sisters. Take them by the hand and lead them back to the pulpit they should be occupying. Take them to the Council of the elders and talk to them there and then if all fails, spew them out of your mouth as some kind of bitterness you cannot abide.

Your brothers and sisters, your neighbours and your children could all be the victims of the violence which is around you. You dare not tolerate a Church which is party to that violence or even tolerant of that violence. Stand up and speak peace, demand peace and settle for nothing but peace.

There has been a tragic representation to the outside world of the South African political scene, and particularly the Black political scene, which encourages governments and the international ecumenical bodies of the world to see South Africa as filled with goodies and badies. A whole system of referring requests for

financial assistance and other assistance to the African National Congress as a revolutionary organisation has actually emerged.

My brothers and sisters, I tell you here and now that we will prevail in our efforts to establish peace; we will prevail in pursuing the politics of negotiation which will bring about radical change through non-violent means. I do not doubt that in the end the African National Congress will have to participate in the peace initiatives which we the people of South Africa are establishing. I am not now sounding off against the African National Congress. They are our brothers and sisters in exile and we must bring them home. We dare not reject them. We must accept them when they want to join us in our quest for peaceful change as our brothers and sisters.

My brothers and sisters, I am supported in my drive for peace by every right-thinking Black South African. Dr. Nelson Mandela who has suffered so greatly for more than a quarter of a century could perhaps most be excused if he were bitter and angry. Instead of bitterness and anger, there comes from his jail cell a message of peace.

My brothers and sisters, he wrote to me from jail calling for peace between Blacks who are killing each other. It shames those in jail that we who are out of jail involve ourselves in Black-on-Black confrontations leading to violence and death. They suffered for us - all of us - the whole of South Africa. We must honour our martyrs by establishing peace amongst ourselves. The letter Dr. Nelson Mandela wrote to me from jail reads as follows:

1335/88: NELSON MANDELA. Victor Verster Prison  
Private Bag X6005  
Paarl South, 7624

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Dear Shenge,

I thank you for the warm and well-considered telex message you sent me on behalf of King Zwelithini and Inkatha on the occasion of my seventieth birthday. I also received your letter of 26 August 1988 in which you wished me a speedy recovery from illness, and in which you outlined your efforts both locally and abroad to secure the release of prisoners in South Africa.

Apart from your telex and a telegram from Mrs. Helen Suzman, hundreds of similar messages came from well-wishers in the country and in different parts of the world. It is partly the unswerving support of such men and women, and partly the achievements made by our organisation within and outside the country which have given prisoners so much strength and hope.

You will readily accept that it is not at all easy from my present quarters to comment fully and freely on the sentiments you so eloquently expressed in the above correspondence. It is sufficient to state that your persistent demand for the unconditional release of prisoners before negotiation can start, is a stand which I have always welcomed as a positive contribution to the search for lasting peace in this country.

Obviously, my present hope lies to see, in due course, the restoration of the cordial relations which existed between you and O.R., and between the two organisations in the seventies.

The most challenging task facing the leadership today is that of national unity. At no other time in our history has it become so crucial for our people to speak with one voice, and to pool their efforts. Any act or statement, from whatever source, which tends to create or worsen divisions is, in the existing political situation, a fatal error which ought to be avoided at all costs.



Far more information than I possess at the moment is required before I can blame any of the parties involved in the deplorable conflicts now taking place in Natal. All the same, I consider it a serious indictment against all of us that we are still unable to combine forces to stop the slaughter of so many innocent lives. The struggle is our life and, even though the realisation of our fondest dreams may not be at hand, we can nevertheless make that struggle immensely enriching or absolutely disastrous.

In my entire political career few things have distressed me as to see our people killing one another as is now happening. As you know, the entire fabric of community life in some of the affected areas has been seriously disrupted, leaving behind a legacy of

hatred and bitterness which may haunt us for years to come. It is a matter which requires the urgent attention of all people in this country. Nothing will please me more than to know that my concern

and appeal have not fallen on deaf ears.

Once again, thank you, the King and Inkatha for your inspiring message. My best wishes to you and Mndlunkulu.

Yours sincerely,

MADIBA

All I am doing is pointing out that violence has gone very far and done great damage and that that damage even enters the whole world of the churches and ecumenical movements. There has been a shedding of belief in the power of peace. That to me is like denying Christ in every bit of political propaganda that is written about the need for violence.

And thus on this day of National Prayer in our circumstances in which we find ourselves today, I say to you support me in my peace initiatives; take my peace initiative home with you; take it to work with you; nurture it and be one with the great God in our midst who died to establish Peace and Goodwill amongst all mankind that we may know God in knowing each other.

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